

No Gluten for Me!

But it's food isn't it?

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What could possibly be bad about wheat? I don't have any bowel reactions... so, its okay for me, right?

The more I see people at our clinic eating a gluten free diet, the more I realize how bad our modern day wheat (and other gluten containing grains) is for our bodies. Man's conquest and domestication of wheat, rye and other glutenous grains has revolutionized our diets from berries, nuts and meats to our modern day diet laced with and often dominated by gluten grains.

The modern day diet can cause both obvious and subtle health reactions. It seems, the more man improves upon the hybridization and cultivation of wheat, the worse the effects become.

The Majestic Wheat of olden days was grown from seed saved year to year. It would spoil if kept too long or not kept dry. It would germinate and produce more wheat when cultivated. Majestic Wheat would cross pollinate with other wheat and provided the genetic variety needed by man's digestive system. Just as the seasons provide variety in our diet with the different fruits and vegetables coming in out of season, cross pollination adds variety to our diets by providing genetic variety. This is important because eating the same thing day after day makes the body allergic to your favorite foods.

Modern day wheat is mostly a monoclonal hybrid that does not have the genetic variety found in Majestic Wheat. Neither will it germinate to produce another wheat plant. But hence, after it is harvested, it is stored on average for three to four years in bunkers where toxic gases and insidious molds and other pathogens can proliferate.

To top it off, wheat is often so finely ground, over-processed and bleached at the mill that insects have difficulty finding life-sustaining nourishment in this food product. This wheat is so finely ground that it bypasses our digestion process in the digestive tract and shunts directly into the bloodstream causing blood sugar spikes and allergic reactions. I remember growing up with a wheat sifter to sift out the husks and weevils from the flour before we added it to our baking recipes. Nowadays there is no need to sift our flour because insects seek other sources of nutrition and leave this less nutritious wheat powder alone.

Wheat, and some other grains that contain a protein called gluten, are rich in glutamine and proline. Proteins in these grains and their related peptides can damage the intestines -- as in the case of Celiac disease -- by stimulating the natural transglutaminase enzymes. These gluten proteins and consequent enzyme peptides cut and damage the sensitive villi in the intestines. Villi are tiny finger-like epithelial formations that greatly increase the absorptive surface area of the intestines, and are responsible for the uptake of properly digested nutrients. When the villi are damaged or destroyed, this thrusts unprepared foods and metabolites directly into the bloodstream, causing anemia and folate shortages, along with both immune system and increased insulin responses. Gluten sensitivity plus intestinal damage equals Celiac disease.

Another component of wheat and rye grains is a sticky protein called lectin which enters the epithelial cells and causes inflammatory reactions that also damage the villi and other cells in the body. Lectin is also a protein that is linked to Crohn's Disease and IBS (irritable bowel syndrome).

A 2003 study, quoted in a recent publication of Scientific American, found that 1 out of every 133 people has a sensitivity to gluten. Some of the many symptoms of gluten sensitivity that the article listed are: Anemia, osteoporosis, joint pain, chronic fatigue, short stature, skin lesions, seizures, dementia, schizophrenia, immune dysfunction, blood glucose and insulin level problems and hyperactivity. Other signs may be: failure to thrive, acne, dermatitis herpetiformis, ADHD and Asperger's syndrome. One-hundred percent of all people who have gluten sensitivity, intolerance or allergic responses have a negative neurological response. And yet only 33% of all people with this challenge will notice a digestive problem like gas, bowel pain, diarrhea or constipation. This means that there a lot of people reacting to gluten and they don't even know it.

In history, many others have realized food is a cause of imbalances. A Greek physician by the name of Aretaeus of Cappadocia, living in about A.D 250, described a disease he labeled "koiliakos" or "suffering in the bowels". Aretaeus recommended diet changes to relieve the symptoms of this disease. In the early 1800's a Dr Mathew Baillie treated chronic diarrhea with diet changes that included limiting the diet to mostly rice. A Dutch pediatrician named Willem Karel Dicke documented a significant drop in child mortality that coincided with a bread and wheat shortage during WW II. In his doctoral thesis he declared that child mortality rates dropped tremendously from above 35% to nearly 0 only to return to the previous figures when bread and wheat again became available. Dr. Dicke also documented a dramatic drop in Celiac disease during this same time.

A 2006 study mentioned in the Journal of Attention Disorders took 131 children with ADHD and removed gluten from their diets and all 131 children were reported to have significant improvements. A recent contestant on a popular television reality show, Survivor, was relieved of her chronic IBS when her participation changed her diet away from gluten. She had been diagnosed and treated by the medical system for her condition for years without ever making the connection to gluten. At the Healing Pathways Medical Clinic people document various positive and sometimes huge changes in their health in a short time after eliminating gluten from their diets.

A growing awareness of glutes in the diet in the medical and nutritional professions is starting to alert people to some of the problems caused by eating glutes. If you suspect a sensitivity to gluten take a gluten-free challenge for several weeks and see what changes come out of it. Then after a few weeks of gluten-free eating note what happens when you eat gluten again. It may astonish you, and it may change your life and your health for the better.

Until next time its gluten free for me!

Note: New research into treatments for gluten sensitivities and Celiac Disease are bringing surprises according to Dr Alessio Fasano who is finding results with probiotics!

For more resources and information:

<http://www.celiac.com/>

<http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/celiac/>

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